

*Mr. Fish:* That is good wages.

598. *Mr. Guinness.*] But they do not get much more than three days' work a week, if you take the whole year through?—If you take the whole year round, what with holidays and one thing and another, they will not work, at the outside, more than four days.

599. Is it not a fact that they cannot get it to do?—I say it is a fact that they can often get it and will not work; that is my experience of the position. Before passing from the question of average work, I say that, in mine work, for the past three months, the men are making five days a week—those who wish to work. The average in our works at the Brunner Mine exceeds three days a week. Looking at the slackness of trade, it is due very much to the miners themselves that they get so little, for they keep too many of their men in the district, thus preventing them going elsewhere: and, consequently, where there is less work to do there is a greater number of men than are necessary to do it. It may be called an act of generosity on their part. I have nothing to say to that, but the effect of it is, they keep some twenty or more men in the district than there is a demand for. In order to bring this matter to a settlement, some time ago I invited the miners to come together and let us both have a full discussion of the subject: and so we did. I put before them my views as regards the position of the trade. Now, our returns will show that when the men are only working three days a week we are absolutely making a loss; when they are working five days a week we are making a profit. This proves that we have an interest greater than the miners in making good trade, if we can get it.

600. *Mr. Feldwick.*] Is there a large quantity of coal in those pillars?—Yes; the pillars would give a couple of years' work to thirty or forty miners to bring the output from this mine up to its former condition. But this does not mean anything more than that we have to expend a much larger sum of money. Where there is a fault in a mine it takes a great deal of money sometimes to prove it. When this property—the Brunner Mine—was in my own possession I spent £10,000 in proving one fault; but that does not show that there may not be many other faults in it.

601. *Mr. Guinness.*] Did you not prove this fault many years ago?—Yes, I proved one fault.

602. Three or four years ago, did you not prove the existence of coal in your mine, out of which you could get sufficient to satisfy the output conditions without working the pillars?—Not without spending a large sum of money.

603. I think you said that, if you literally complied with the conditions in each of these three leases, which require you to put out 85,000 tons of coal, the actual output from two is more than what is required from the three?—Yes, I do say so.

604. Would it pay any other mine to barely comply with output in the leases? Would it not be necessary for them to have to put out a greater output to make it pay?—Not in the Brunner, but in the Wallsend it would. The plant in the Pit Heath and the Brunner Mine are practically amalgamated. The two mines in future must be worked as one, with one plant. Whether the output is large or not, they will have to be worked with one plant.

605. Are you aware that the Westport Coal Company—the owners of the Wallsend lease—some time ago acquired 150 acres of freehold in the centre of their lease?—I understood that was so.

606. The whole of that plant and machinery are on that 150 acres?—Yes; their surface-plant is so.

607. Can you tell us whether they are getting out coal from the 150 acres or from the leasehold?—I think it is from the leasehold and freehold.

608. Have you no plans of the working to enable us to see?—I have no plan with me of the Wallsend lease.

609. Will you allow your manager to send us one?—It is obtainable from the Mines Department: Mr. Binns has got it.

610. Will you tell us whether any coal has been got out of the freehold?—I do not know the boundaries sufficiently to be able to tell you anything definite about it: the leasehold, I know, is at both sides of the freehold, which is in the centre.

611. The Tyneside was a part of the Wallsend originally opened by Kilgour?—It was originally opened by the Greymouth Coal Company.

612. Mr. Kilgour erected machinery there?—He did.

613. He opened it afresh?—All I can say is, that he worked some coal: about opening I cannot say.

614. Has the Grey Valley Company purchased from Kilgour?—Yes; they purchased whatever interest he had.

615. Since they have purchased have they done any work?—Yes, a good deal.

616. Taken any coal out?—Yes, a lot of coal.

617. Out of Tyneside?—Yes, out of Tyneside. They worked it until the Newcastle strike took off.

618. When did it cease?—I could not tell you exactly the date, but I know it was worked two or three weeks after the strike took off.

619. After the Newcastle strike?—Yes.

620. What was the greatest output from the Brunner in one year?—111,000 tons.

621. Can you give us the average of the lease?—In 1884 it was 77,316 tons; in 1885, 111,899; 1886, 86,226; 1887, 77,121; and in 1888, 54,741.

622. What has been the output from the Wallsend?—I cannot tell you.

623. You have been connected with it?—All I could tell you is that for each of these periods my output was quite equal to the combined output of the other two: that I used to see for myself from the official records.

624. Are you able to give the Committee a statement as to the capacity of each of these mines—of the quantity you could take out from each mine suppose you had a demand?—The Wallsend,